

Program Memorandum Intermediaries/Carriers

Department of Health &
Human Services (DHHS)
Centers for Medicare &
Medicaid Services (CMS)

Transmittal AB-01-172

Date: NOVEMBER 29, 2001

CHANGE REQUEST 1912

SUBJECT: Promoting Medicare's Screening Pap Test Benefit in Support of Cervical Health Month (January)

In support of Cervical Health Month (January) we are directing Carriers and Intermediaries to promote cervical cancer screening. This effort is particularly important since the female Medicare population has the highest incidence and mortality rates for cervical cancer. To bring the importance of screening Pap tests to their attention, CMS requires you to issue the messages provided in Attachment 1 in your MSN or EOMB during January 2002.

The importance of Pap tests for this age group may be minimized by health care professionals, particularly when a woman is post menopause, has had a hysterectomy, or is not sexually active. We want to remind providers of the mortality and morbidity statistics of women in this age group due to cervical cancer and to direct them to free educational materials. The article in Attachment 2 accomplishes this. CMS requires you to include this article in your next regularly scheduled newsletter that is closest to January.

NOTE: These initiatives should be undertaken only if they do not involve systems changes.

Attachments

The effective date for this Program Memorandum (PM) is January 2002.

The implementation date for the PM is January 1, 2002.

The instructions should be implemented within your current operating budget.

This PM may be discarded after January 31, 2002.

If you have any questions regarding the content of the MSN/EOMB message or information provided in Attachments 1 & 2, contact Janet Miller at 410-786-2157 or Jmiller2@cms.hhs.gov. For questions about implementation of the activities specified in this PM, call or write the regional office contact listed below:

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Attachment 1

English

January is cervical health month. The Pap test is the most effective way to screen for cervical cancer. Medicare helps pay for screening Pap tests every two years. For more payment information on Pap tests, call your Medicare carrier.

Spanish

Enero representa el mes de la salud del cuello del útero. La prueba de Papanicolao (o la prueba Pap) es la manera más efectiva para detectar el cáncer cervical. Medicare ayuda a pagar por las pruebas de Papanicolao cada dos años. Para más información acerca de la prueba de Papanicolao, llame a su agencia de seguro de Medicare.

Attachment 2

New Educational Materials for Cervical Cancer Screening

Women rely on their health care providers for screening recommendations. Many women, especially older women, are not aware of the importance of cervical cancer screening and may not ask for Pap tests. Your reminder about the need for a regular Pap test is important.

The National Cancer Institute (NCI) estimates that about 12,900 cases of newly diagnosed invasive cervical cancer will occur in the United States this year and that about 4,400 of the women affected by the disease will die. Women age 65 and older have the highest mortality but the lowest screening rates. To increase the rates of cervical cancer screening among older women, Medicare has changed its coverage of Pap tests to once every two years. Women may be more likely to get a Pap test if they know Medicare will help pay for it.

Congress has designated January as Cervical Health Month. This may be an opportunity for you to talk to your patients about cervical health. To assist you in communicating with your patients, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and the National Cancer Institute have developed a Health Professional's Pap Test Packet. The packet contains a brochure on Pap tests designed for older women, a resource guide for health professionals, and a Pap test reminder pad with tear-off sheets to give to your patients. This information can be accessed at <http://cancer.gov/publications>. After reaching the site, click on "Type of Cancer", then on "Cervix". You then may view and/or order publications. You may also call the National Cancer Institute at 1-800-4CANCER (1-800-422-6237) to order the materials. Up to 20 items may be ordered for free. Shipping and handling charges may be applied to larger orders.